

## Community Arts and Culture Initiative with Muslim Australians

### Background

The activities proposed in this Initiative are underpinned by needs identified by Muslim Australians in the Commission's Ismağ report. This report found that Muslim communities should not be targeted in isolation. If projects are to foster mutual respect and understanding, projects need Muslim community participation but also need to reach the broader Australian community.

#### What is Community Arts?

Community Arts covers a broad range of activities and uses participation, collaboration and inspiration to work creatively with individuals and communities to tackle complex social, economic and cultural issues affecting them.

#### Community Arts:

- encourages active participation, bringing communities together using creative processes to develop skills, leadership qualities and to express their concerns and aspirations to a broader audience
- helps provide participants, often marginalised individuals and communities who struggle to find a voice for themselves, a safe space to explore issues affecting them, by developing constructive ways of working with them
- provides participants with an opportunity to tell their stories, build creative and leadership skills and be active participants in the development of their culture and identity.

### Project

The Initiative is a partnership through a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Australia Council for the Arts and the Australian Human Rights Commission to deliver awareness and empowerment outcomes in both human rights and the arts.

This national community cultural development collaboration supports local community arts projects with different Muslim communities (particularly with young Muslim Australians) in urban, fringe urban and rural locations across Australia, in several states over several years.

It is anticipated that the arts projects under this Initiative will deliver the following agreed outcomes in the mutual areas of human rights and the arts:

- to build self-esteem and capacity in diverse Muslim groups and forge a sense of group culture as well as individual identity to, and within, Australian culture.
- to build social capital to help, through artistic/cultural expression, to build participation and inclusion, skills, confidence, mutual respect and understanding.

It is anticipated that the Initiative will demonstrate how community harmony and community relations can be strengthened through social and cultural inclusion in collective, local arts-based projects.

#### The aims of the Initiative are to:

- provide an alternative platform and voice for marginalised communities and individuals, particularly young Muslim Australians, to address feelings of alienation, powerlessness, discrimination, victimisation

- facilitate a connection between young Australian Muslim people and the larger society they live in – whether this is the ‘mainstream’ community or their own communities
- empowering Muslim communities and particularly young Muslim Australians to increase their participation in social and cultural life via collective, local arts-based projects – this in turn contributes to increasing social inclusion

## Objectives

- promote positive messages (and counteract negative stereotypes) of Muslim Australians
- provide Muslim Australians with the opportunity to build better understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim Australians
- increase awareness in the local and broader community of the social and personal impacts felt by victims of discrimination, vilification and abuse
- help build self-esteem and knowledge within Muslim communities, especially amongst young Muslim Australians
- increase the sense of belonging of the Muslim community in the broader Australian community – for both participants and the whole Muslim community
- increase both the individual and community sense of belonging by facilitating expression and experience of Muslim Australians
- facilitate a high-quality community arts and culture process to enable Muslim Australian participants to reflect on and contribute to a sense of belonging
- increase the connection between people’s individual experiences with the broader concept of human rights and the role of the Australian Human Rights Commission
- ensure participants have an opportunity for positive experience through the community cultural development process
- through local-level activities, build understanding, respect and networks between individual, community, government and non-government associations and institutions, including cultural institutions (e.g. local government and Police)

## Partners

### Australia Council for the Arts

The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. It enriches the lives of Australians and their communities by supporting the creation and enjoyment of the arts.